Before she could ask any questions the Duke was helping her up the gangway. They were piped aboard with the Captain and two junior officers receiving them. "It is a great honour to have you aboard, Your Grace," the Captain said.

"I am delighted to be here," the Duke replied, "and I wish to put to sea immediately."

"That is what I expected Your Grace to say," the Captain smiled.

Bewildered, Luella allowed the Duke to take her across the deck. They went into what she found was a beautifully decorated saloon. When he shut the door behind them she said in a very small voice: "What is . . h.happening? Wh.What are . . we doing?"

"We are eloping!" the Duke said. "When you told me about your father, my darling, I knew exactly what I should do. We are running away, just as your mother and father did!"

"But . . you cannot . . y. you . . must not . . !" Luella started to protest.

"When you left me," the Duke said, "I asked myself whether I was a man or a mouse. Then I had the answer – I was a duke – and dukes can do things that ordinary people cannot do."

He gave a short laugh as he said: "When we come home after a very long honeymoon, I can assure you that as a royal-blooded Duchess you will be received by my family with open arms."

"B.but . . the Queen . . what will . . the Queen say?" Luella asked in a whisper.

"It was very unfortunate, but I left for my honeymoon before I could open the Queen's letter inviting

me – or *ordering* me, whichever you like – to Windsor Castle."

Because she could not help it, Luella laughed. "Oh, darling, darling!" she exclaimed. "How can you . . do anything so . . outrageous?"

"We will be married as soon as we have put out to sea, just as your father and mother were," the Duke said. "Now the world is at your feet, and you can choose where we will go."

Luella could only stare at him, thinking this could not be true. "Personally," the Duke said, "I think we should start in Greece. It was the story of your father's elopement which made me remember this yacht, which belonged to my cousin, the Marquess of Gates." He paused a moment and then smiled before adding: "It is now mine and has just been renovated. I hope you appreciate all that has been done."

"Do you . . really mean that . . we can be . . married?" Luella asked.

The engines were already throbbing under their feet. "There is no escape now," the Duke replied. "Aunt Anne would say I have definitely compromised you!"

Luella tried to laugh, but his arms were round her and his lips were on hers.

It was very late that night when Luella stirred against her husband's shoulder. "Are you awake, my precious?" he asked.

"How can I sleep when I am . . so happy?" Luella replied. "Even now I cannot . . believe I am . . really your . . wife . . and I do not have to l.leave you."